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262 vegetables fresh since they live in an area with a more or less continuous rainfall. On the other hand, one of the neighbouring [171] groups, a branch of the Ngoni tribe which trekked up north to this district from a rainless area in South Africa, continues to dry and store most of their vegetables although it is plainly no longer necessary for them to do so.

262 A good many foods are recognized as causing digestive troubles, but not necessarily avoided on that account. Hiccoughs, heart-753 burn, sickness, stomach pains, and diarrhoea are all considered 827 possible results of wrong feeding, although these symptoms may point to other troubles as well. For instance, forms of syphilis (*akaswende*) are believed to be due to 'things that are bad and black in the stomach' (*ifintu fibi fyafita ku munda*), and thought to be cured by strong emetics which cause the patient to vomit up the evil matter. But in so far as diet is responsible for ill health, a native will admit in cold blood that bad food, sour porridge, a sudden excess of meat, or fresh maize eaten off the cob, will produce 'pain over the heart', even though when the time comes he will not be proof against the temptation to eat them. In most cases he may have nothing better to eat, or may feel loath to throw away anything remotely speaking edible. Even an educated Bemba defended the use of putrefying meat by saying, 'Yes, it will give me diarrhoea, but that will be better than throwing the meat away'. When the new maize ripens, the people bolt the cooked grain, stripping four or five cobs at a time. I have seen them sit rocking to and fro with indigestion saying, 'Yes, it hurts on the heart, but we are glad because we are saved from hunger. The new food has come.' Natives say that sick people and children should be given gruel (*umusunga*) and soft food instead of *ubwali*, but the latter at any rate eat what they want. Gastric troubles are bound to be received with greater resignation than in our community in an area where alternative diets for weak digestions practically do not exist.

Tastes, Cravings, and Preferences.

262 Apart from grading their foodstuffs in the order of what they believe to be their nutritive value, the Bemba recognize linguistically certain tastes, and also definite cravings for specific foods probably associated with the deficiencies in their diet.

(*a*) *Tastes.* Bemba foods are not highly flavoured. Of some

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CHAPTER IV

EATING AND DRINKING

Infant Feeding.

THE dietetic prejudices of any people must have their basis in their methods of infant feeding, and it is probable that the most characteristic distinctions between the Bemba attitude to food and our own are occasioned by differences in early training. Unfortunately, it is just on this aspect of Bemba nutrition that it is most difficult to collect accurate information. Babies are suckled at any hour of the day or night, whenever they cry. As they grow older, they are carried about the village on their elder sisters' backs, and seem to be given choice morsels by admiring or affectionate relatives at every hut. When food is plentiful, children under three nibble at something wherever they go. Throughout childhood it is therefore almost impossible to keep any quantitative record of diet. Certain broad facts, however, stand out in contrast to our own methods of infant feeding, and Bemba theory is interesting in this respect.

As in most other African communities, babies are suckled until they are between two and three years old. There is a strong taboo observed by all except urbanized natives on the conception of a new child before the weaning of the last. When the child is four months old, a special rite, 'the taking of the child', *ukupoko mwana*, is performed by the father and mother, and after this ceremony, *coitus interruptus* may be allowed between the parents, but it is considered very dangerous for the mother to become pregnant before her first baby has been successfully weaned. The child will fall ill of a particular disease, *ukulwale lunse*, of which the symptoms are coughing, wasting, or diarrhoea. Even in urbanized districts where the taboo is less rigidly observed, mothers are still uneasy. If a child has been hurriedly weaned to make way for a successor, and later falls ill, the parents are charged with the trouble. Neighbours shake their heads, and if the illness is fatal, whisper that the child has been killed by the mother's folly. There is no doubt that early weaning is still largely prevented by the fear of endangering the baby's life.

It is difficult to know whether the mother, at the end of this long

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Sharing and Supernatural Sanctions.

This definite training in a particular method of distributing food is still further enforced by supernatural sanctions. The Bemba are deeply convinced that relatives who die with a sense of injury have the power to return and afflict the living with misfortune, illness, and even a lingering death from a wasting disease. To injure a man or a woman in this way, and in particular to deny them food when hungry, ill, or cold, is to refuse them their kinship dues. In fact, the definition usually given of such a haunting spirit (*icitwa*) is that it is 'someone who died with grief catching him at the throat' because when he was old his children would not give him food. Of such a calamity the Bemba are genuinely afraid. Even sophisticated young men of the present time speak nervously of the possibility of certain near relatives, particularly the mother, or the mother's brother, dying aggrieved, and there is no doubt that the fear of supernatural punishment is still a very strong sanction enforcing the sharing of food and the provision for dependents.

Besides these positive inducements to share, it must be remembered that the Bemba system of distribution is closely correlated with their type of housing and particular methods of preparing food. We have described the housewife threshing and grinding out of doors, with her store cupboard at some distance from her hut. It is impossible, in a Bemba village, to conceal the fact that extra flour has been prepared, that beer is ready for drinking, or that there is an unexpected supply of meat. The complete publicity of primitive housekeeping is one of the most effective sanctions for the system of distribution of food which they commonly practise. It is important here to notice that Bemba housing is changing under the influence of the white man. The native is taught to build huts with more rooms and even to store his food in his own enclosure. It remains to be seen whether the Bantu will continue to be so generous, according to our standards, when they can conceal their supplies as effectively as we do ourselves.

It can be said therefore that if the Bemba people share their meals and extend hospitality to a wider circle of relatives than we do, it is because from their earliest years they have never been able to consider food as something which could be procured, owned,

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777 into the bush with their baby to save the community from danger.

783 The penalties which fall on those who come in contact with
372 polluted fire are always envisaged as illnesses, mainly of the chest
753 (*cifuba*) and such complaints are very common in Lubemba as we saw. It is important to notice too that the punishment falls on the innocent and not the guilty. The adulterous woman who touches her hearth-stone causes her husband to fall ill 'of the chest' if he accidentally comes near the fire. The father who is 'impure' through illicit intercourse 'kills his child with fire' (*ukumuipaya umulilo*) so that the baby starts to waste away and then to die.

581 The reader will have gathered that strong mystic links are
768 thought to exist between husband and wife. Though marriage
783 appears unstable in Lubemba compared with the unions contracted by some of the patrilineal Bantu in South Africa, yet the destinies of husband and wife are mysteriously joined. If one partner dies, the other must sleep with some social equivalent of the dead—a brother or uterine nephew or a maternal grandson in the case of a dead man, or a sister or granddaughter in the case of a dead woman. This is to 'take the death off' the living partner. A member of the dead man or woman's matrilineage has to fetch back his or her spirit from the living spouse and makes him or her free to remarry.

833 But this is only one example of the belief that the guardian
826 spirit (*mupashi*) and the blood of man and woman mix in sex
837 relationships. Women of loose morals in Northern Rhodesian towns are said to bear few children because they 'mix the blood' of Bemba and men of other tribes. Again, a man who sleeps with two women unites the three in a relationship that is magically perilous, The blood is mixed (*mulopa uasakanya*). If woman *A* commits adultery with *B* and the legitimate wife of *B* sees the blood of *A* from a scratch, a tattooed mark or during menstruation, then she, the guiltless partner, will die at once unless saved by the right medicine. So also if *X*, a man, sleeps with the wife of *Y*, and *Y* sees the blood of *X* by misadventure, then *Y*, the guiltless partner, will die.

833 For mother and daughter to sleep with the same man, albeit
837 unknowingly, is a terrible thing. For an adulterer to pass the dead
691 body of his mistress's husband, or any other man who has slept

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769 living. It also emphasizes the magical powers associated with sex
831 which is linked with feelings of guilt and anxiety expressed in the taboos clustered round marriage, childbirth and the rearing of children. This feeling of guilt is so widely diffused that innocent
[783] people are thought to suffer from the magical results of a sex misdemeanour committed by someone else.

581 These beliefs support the institution of marriage since safety
789 from magical danger is acquired by means of a ceremony which can
837 only be carried out by a man's head wife. No Bemba supposes that a husband will be kept from adultery by this means, but the legal wife is the only person who can secure him and those near him from the resultant punishment.

622 The reader is asked to bear in mind, without attempting further
372 analysis, the association that exists in Bemba ideology between
831 chieftainship, fire, sex and power to influence the fertility of the
789 land and its people, and to remember that these powers are hurt
● 753 by blood, intercourse out of marriage, death, murder, lion-killing and all cold, terrible or 'bad things' (*fibi*). Fertility which is so much desired is produced by conduct pleasing to the ancestors, and to senior and especially paternal relatives, the blessings of persons in authority and the carrying out of the ritual of marriage. Illness is inflicted usually on the innocent party, by sex relations out of marriage without ritual purification, by bad conduct, and because of injury to people who, since they have died in a state of righteous indignation, will 'come back' to haunt the family which did them wrong.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

642 The most characteristic features of the Bemba social structure
611 are its hierarchical and authoritarian type of government, of which
591 the apex is a paramount chief believed to have supernatural powers; and its system of matrilineal descent with uxorilocal marriage.

643 The political structure of the Bemba is a centralized one. Its unity under a single head, the *Citimukulu*, was achieved, in 1931 at any rate, because of a belief in the spiritual powers the king was

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really carried out by those who believe themselves to possess black powers'. In other areas, the possession of powers of black magic is inherited in certain families and openly recognized. In other tribes, among them the Babemba, no witch-doctor will ever admit that he possesses any magic of destruction, although he may grudgingly allow that he can sometimes protect those who are attacked by the spell of a sorcerer. In this particular the natives believe that they differ from neighbouring tribes, for I heard of a man who had made a journey to the country of the Batabwa to the North-West, where he said black magic could be openly bought and sold.

This, then, is the question we shall have to ask ourselves in trying to assess the strength of the *Bamucapi*. In accounting for failing luck and disaster, what sum of human ills is debited to the sorcerers' account? It is obvious that the problem is one of practical importance to the administrator. If a native announces that his child has been killed by the evil magic of a fellow human being, he is probably punished with a legal penalty, but if the same native volunteers his bereavement to be due to the anger of his dead great-grandfather, to him an equally credible statement, he will merely be received with a tolerant smile.

Now a characteristic of Bemba belief is the number of different causes to which human ills may be attributed, and of these witchcraft is at first sight not the most important. A man may suffer harm (*a*) because of the anger of his ancestral spirits (*mipaʃi*) to whom he owes certain duties of respect, and who are ultimately responsible for punishing any infringement of tribal law. The spirit of a commoner will punish members of his own particular family, though admittedly not mortally, while the *mupaʃi* of a chief may inflict disaster on the whole land, either in the form of general bad luck, or some dramatic disaster such as a locust plague: (*b*) through the vengeance of a haunting spirit (*ciwa*), the avenging ghost of an ancestor who died neglected, injured, or wrongfully accused by his relatives: (*c*) through the neglect of some important ritual, such, for instance, as that protecting the purity of the household fire; or the breaking of some moral rule such as adultery committed in special circumstances: (*d*) through punishment sent by a chief's *mupaʃi* as the result of a human curse (*kulapiʃya*) when the individual concerned cannot find out who has injured or stolen from him, and calls for divine aid. In all these cases there is one common

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753 769 626 feature. Punishment is only inflicted by the supernatural power when it is deserved. The religious dogma follows strictly the tribal morality and gives it its sanction. It stresses particularly that basic sentiment of Bemba society—the attitude of a man to authority in general and in particular to his chief. *Mipaʃi* are injured if not given proper respect, while the whole land suffers if the chief defaults. So also in the case of the avenging *ciwa*, it is the failure to honour and stand by your relations which is punished, the typical case always given being that of the old mother who dies of starvation and neglect. Here again the *ciwa* [776] may not even return and haunt the living without the permission of Lesa, the High-God, and only a spirit suffering under a legitimate grievance is allowed to avenge. The curse by the name of a dead chief will only light on the real offender.

626 787 To sum up, according to Bemba dogma most misfortune is believed to be due to wrong-doing, and in particular transgression of the rules of respect to authority. The cause of the disaster can be ascertained by divination, itself a mechanism socially approved and carried out by a reputable character, the *yanga*. The remedy can be procured by the purchase of medicine, by the performance of a laborious rite, and perhaps, most important of all, by the public admission of guilt.

754 In this apparently logical and orderly system there is, according to theory, only one incalculable element—the sorcerer (*muloʃi*) who kills without rhyme or reason, for the sake of doing harm. The *baloʃi* are enemies of society and running counter to its laws. They actually start their careers of crime by committing some outrageous act, such as father-daughter incest, or the murder of a baby of their own clan. They have various mythical attributes. They can make themselves invisible; kill at a distance; send magic birds to steal food from their enemies; and of course perform secret rites and possess and sell evil [828] medicines. Now it is obvious that such sorcerers are actually non-existent, though their mythical attributes are readily credited to unpopular people of dour or difficult temperaments, bad mixers in the American sense, bad sharers, or persons who seem to be winning 754 unusual success at others' expense. I would not be bold enough to say 789 that no rites of evil magic are performed in Bemba country, or that 578 there do not exist here and there individuals who believe themselves to possess such powers. But it is the reflection of the *buloʃi* belief in